

Dear Commissioners:

Stop hidden phone fees so I can truly compare prices of phone services. I support the petition filed by the National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates and endorsed by other consumer advocacy organizations. CG Docket No. 04-208, Petition for Declaratory Ruling Regarding Truth-In-Billing and Billing Format, is long overdue.

Phone bills should be truthful and easy to understand. Phone bills have gotten ridiculous in the past 10 years. It is beyond difficult to determine exactly what you're being billed for, and most of us don't have hours to spend pouring over our telephone bills. In addition, calling the phone company has become an exercise in futility. A few years back I was trying to cut down on monthly expenses and contacted my phone company about cancelling some of the "special services" they offered. After being put on hold for nearly 15 minutes I tried to explain what I wanted to the "customer service" rep. I asked what my basic monthly service would cost with just two of the nine services they offered "bundled." I was told that there was no way to estimate that. I was astounded. I didn't want an "estimate." How can a business not know what their basic rates are? How can consumers make informed decisions about how and where to spend THEIR money unless they're given complete and factual information? I tried three more times to get an answer but the results were the same. I finally gave up, which is what I think these companies count on. It's as if their intention is to confuse and frustrate customers, allowing them to continue charging what they please, and it seems to be working wonderfully. My phone company is currently blitzing the airwaves with advertising bragging about their "spirit of service in action." How stupid do they think we are? Consumers deserve to be treated fairly and honestly, not given the run around. What are these companies trying to hide? Please do all you can to reform this industry and make it responsive to the public it serves. Thank you!

Because this practice is tolerated by the FCC, long distance and wireless phone companies are able to hide the true cost of service. These add-ons make the advertised price of service significantly less than the amount of the check I have to write each month to pay the bill. Competition will not work if consumers cannot accurately compare prices when shopping for service.

Many states are stepping up to address this problem. They should be allowed to proceed. However, the FCC shouldn't shirk its responsibility, nor limit states from doing more.

The FCC should immediately grant the NASUCA petition to investigate billing practices, and prohibit phone and wireless companies from imposing separate monthly fees, line items or surcharges unless expressly mandated by law or the charge is expressly authorized by a governmental authority.